

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, about 36 million women in the U.S. have a physical disability. A disability is a health condition that can make it hard to do daily tasks.

Women with disabilities are just as likely to get breast cancer as other women. Yet they tend to get screened for breast cancer less often than women without disabilities. Every woman needs to have regular breast cancer screening tests.

Barriers to screening for women with disabilities

A main barrier to breast cancer screening is lack of access. It may be hard for some disabled women to get to a mammography center. Some centers and mobile mammography vans may not be designed for women who have trouble getting around. Some mammography equipment may not adjust enough for some women to easily get into the right position or to sit, if needed.

Breast cancer screening tips for women with disabilities

- Call the centers in your area to find one that meets your needs.
- Find a doctor who is sensitive to your needs. Ask your friends, family members and other disabled women for a referral.
- When you schedule your mammogram, let the staff know about your disability. It helps to talk about this up front since some places may not be right for you. For example, if you find it hard to stand, ask if you can sit instead. Let the staff know if you need a sign language interpreter. If you can, tell them where to find one.
- Bring a friend or someone you trust. They may be able to help.
- If you're not happy with the services you receive, speak up. This may help increase access for you and others. Too often, clinics don't know how to improve their services to meet their patients' needs.



If you can, get to know the way your breasts normally look and feel. This will help you know when something has changed. Report changes to your doctor. Ask your doctor about a clinical breast exam if you are not given one at your yearly check-up.

Breast cancer treatment and recovery

If you have breast cancer, there are ways a disability can affect treatment and recovery. For example, it may be hard to travel to a hospital for treatment. Or, an upper body disability can make it hard to manage lymphedema if you can't massage your arm.

Think about issues that may impact your care, such as if you have weak muscles, can't walk, use crutches or a wheelchair or are often fatigued.

Share any concerns with your doctor. Together you can ensure your needs are met during your breast cancer treatment.

WOMEN WITH DISABILITIES and Breast Cancer

Resources

Susan G. Komen®

1-877 GO KOMEN
(1-877-465-6636)
komen.org

American Association on Health and Disability (AAHD)

301-545-6140
aahd.us

Office on Women's Health

1-800-994-9662
womenshealth.gov

Women with Disabilities (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)

1-800-232-4636
[cdc.gov/ncbddd/
disabilityandhealth/
women.html](http://cdc.gov/ncbddd/disabilityandhealth/women.html)

Related online resources:

- [Breast Cancer Screening & Follow-up Tests](#)
- [Mammography](#)
- [Support After A Breast Cancer Diagnosis](#)
- [Talking With Your Doctor](#)

Getting involved

You know best how to improve health care facilities, medical equipment and doctor-patient relations. Use your voice. If access to health care for the disabled isn't as good as it could be in your area, speak up. Talk with your local medical centers, health insurance providers and elected officials.

What is Komen doing?

Susan G. Komen® and the American Association on Health and Disability (AAHD) are working address and remove barriers to breast cancer screening and treatment for women with disabilities. Komen and AAHD launched [Project Accessibility USA: Removing Barriers for Women with Disabilities \(in 2012\)](#). Through Project Accessibility USA, we are changing the status quo for women with disabilities and ensuring access to quality breast cancer care for all.



This content provided by Susan G. Komen® is designed for educational purposes only and is not exhaustive. Please consult with your personal physician.